

DRAFT

North Pacific Fishery Management Council
HAPC Technical Sub group Report
Federal Building Room 445
Juneau, AK 10am-3pm
May 5, 2004

Committee members: Stephanie Madsen NPFMC chair (facilitator), Cora Crome, Petersburg Vessel Owners Association (PVOA); Steve Fish, Sitka fisherman; Richie Davis (Seafood Producers Coop); Matt Eagleton, NMFS.

Agency: Cathy Coon, NPFMC; Phil Rigby & Bob Stone, NMFS ABL; Jon Kurland, NMFS-HCD; John Lepore, NOAA GC; Jeff Passer, NMFS enforcement

Public present: Cara Rodgveller, Oceana; Michelle Ridgway, Oceanus; Brent Fenty The Ocean Conservancy (TOC); Lisa Butner North Pacific Longline Association (NPLA).

Goal/Purpose of meeting:

A technical subgroup met to provide refinements to the boundaries of HAPC proposal #8, which was submitted to the Council by NMFS. The proposal suggested four separate sites within southeast Alaska to protect high-density areas of high relief Primnoa (red tree corals). Public testimony during the April 2004 Council meeting suggested that the boundaries of these four sites occur within core fishing areas for the halibut long line and the under 60' fleet targeting sablefish and demersal rockfish fisheries whose data was not represented in the staff's initial economic evaluation.

Presentation of existing proposal:

NMFS staff provided an overview of the proposal (Matt Eagleton and Bob Stone). Included in the presentation were video clips from submersible dives within these four sites. Although there were numerous submersible dives in the entire Gulf of Alaska, these four sites were selected based on their unique characteristics and high densities of Primnoa. Much of the research that has identified these locations has been in conjunction with other projects, so there has been no directed research to document the Gulf-wide distribution or abundance of Primnoa habitat.

- Dixon Entrance site was based on several research sources. NMFS longline sablefish assessment survey had two sets within this site, as well as a 1992 study by Ken Krieger in the submersible. The original bounds were set to cover the bathymetric feature where the coral was observed and thought to occur.
- Cape Ommaney site was originally observed to have coral in late 1980's by a NMFS assessment on Pacific Ocean Perch (POP). NMFS ABL revisited the area in 2001 to document corals with the Delta submersible. The multibeam image occurred after the submersible work but overlays nicely on the lower end of the spit.
- Fairweather Grounds- the two sites within this area were chosen from combination NMFS and ADF&G submersible dives with high amounts of coral.

Preliminary analysis summary of affected fisheries:

Council staff provided an overview of the affected fisheries from the HAPC sites. There are currently no crab or scallop fisheries affected in these sites. The sablefish hook and line fishery would suffer a reduction of .27% based on a five year historic catch in the four HAPC sites based on the entire sablefish catch in NMFS report area 640. This does not account for the unobserved portion of the 30% covered sector (vessels 60-125' in

length). The demersal rockfish fishery (DSR) in southeast occurs within some of these sites, however according to ADF&G it is minimal. The northern Fairweather box there were 10 rockfish sets between 1998-2002, in the lower Fairweather box there were 14 sets made. No sets were made for the DSR rockfish fishery in either the Dixon Entrance or Cape Ommaney Area. The halibut fleet would be affected the greatest, up to 33 vessels have used these 4 sites in aggregate, and the IPHC logbooks entail approximately 200,000lbs in a 5year period. There additionally may be some sablefish hook and line vessels under 60' fishing in these areas, however that data was not readily available for this portion of the analysis.

Public Comment:

Comments were accepted during two components of the meeting. Brent (TOC), wanted to know if we had addressed the appropriate size for benefits for these MPA's in addition to the size to allow current fishing practices to occur.

Work session on developing recommendations on redefining boundaries:

- Dixon Entrance: The technical subgroup agreed that the current bounds of this site were acceptable. The area within the site does not fall within core fishing areas. Additionally the site covers the features adequately. The team noted that this area might have experienced some disturbance from a couple of NMFS longline and trawl surveys.
- Cape Ommaney: Steve Fish proposed a site that would reduce the current HAPC site to only enclose the known Primnoa locations based on the submersible tracts. The group overall looked at the multibeam image of the spit where this coral habitat occurred. Cora Crome indicated that the fleet regularly utilized the 100 fathom contour line within the northern portion of the site, and it would be better to expand the northern edge to go up to that contour line. Steve Fish discussed the merits of enclosing the flanks of the spit as a modified HAPC site to allow fishers to continue to fish up to the edge of the spit but not over the feature with observed coral. There was discussion on how much of a buffer was needed for gear movement, and the committee decided that fishing along the edge of the spit was acceptable because the gear does not move that much if set properly.
- Fairweather grounds: The committee suggested modifications to both the northern and southern boxes within the existing proposal. In the Northern site, the boundaries encompass two sections seen in side scan sonar that have rough rocky habitat, and between the two features there are sandy bottoms that have fishing effort. The committee recommended splitting the Northern site into two separate boxes to allow the halibut fisherman to fish the sandy bank, while protecting the rocky habitat that has observed coral densities. The committee additionally suggested modifying the southern Fairweather site to be separated into two areas to protect the coral features while allowing the fisheries to occur in their historic areas. The left site within the southern box would be triangular to encompass the 3 submersible dives. The right side within the southern box would be a rectangular box the submersible site.

Wrap Up/Closing Remarks:

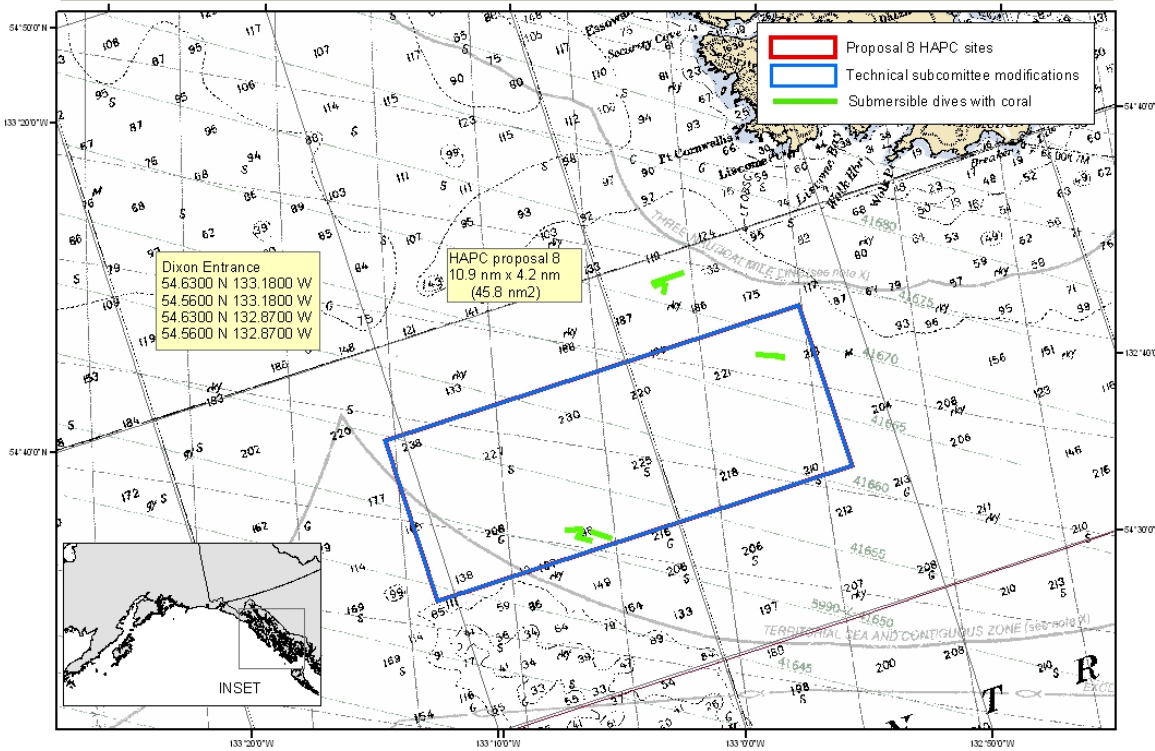
The committee concurred with the modifications of the proposed HAPC site boundaries as a reasonable compromise that would protect observed high density coral areas while allowing fishing to continue in historic fishing areas.

The committee requested clarification if the NMFS surveys with bottom contact gear would be precluded from the identified areas, if management measures require no bottom contact gear. Additionally, the committee asked Council staff to clarify whether the halibut and state demersal shelf rockfish fishery would be excluded from the proposed HAPCs.

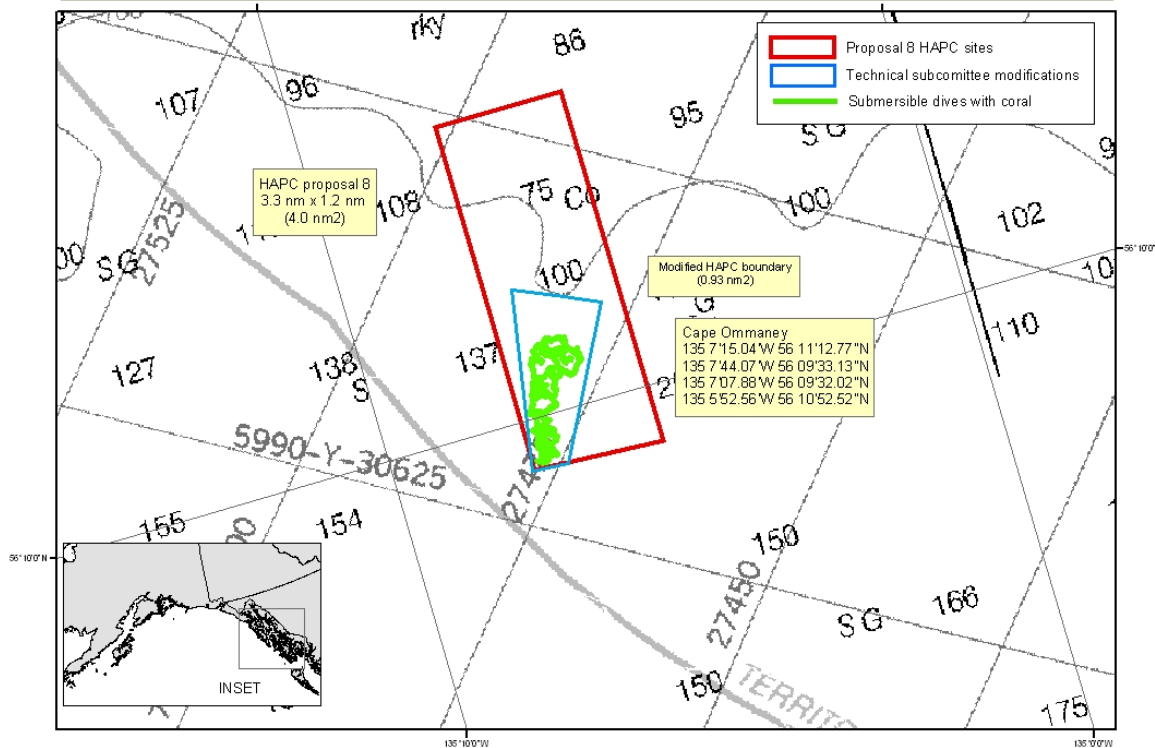
Ms. Madsen thanked the participants of the committee for coming well prepared and ready to work. Staff during the June Council meeting will report the findings of the workgroup.

Meeting adjourned at 3pm.

Technical subcommittee HAPC modifications - Dixon Entrance



Technical subcommittee HAPC modifications - Cape Ommaney



Technical subcommittee HAPC modifications - Fairweather

